

LAUNCHING OF THE DECADE OF ACTION (2011-2020) FOR ROAD SAFETY IN THE UNECE REGION



Conclusions and recommendations

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) conference “Launching of the Decade of Action (2011-2010) for Road Safety in the UNECE region”, hosted by the Ministry of the Interior, Road Traffic Directorate, Ministry of Infrastructure and Road Traffic Safety Agency of Serbia took place on 27-29 April 2011 in Belgrade.

The Conference was opened by Mr. Ivica DACIC, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Mr. Milutin MRKONJIC, Minister of Infrastructure and Energy, Mr. Zarko OBRAVONIC, Minister of Education and Mr. Jan KUBIS, UNECE Executive Secretary. Mr. Nikolay ASAUL, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yauheni POLUDZEN Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Spyros VOUGIAS, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks of Greece and Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS, Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization also addressed the Conference at the opening.

The conference was attended by more than 100 participants from the public sector, international and regional organizations, NGOs, the private sector and academia. Delegations from the Ministries of Transport, Public Works, Interior, Health and Education from Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey and the United States were present. The European Union also attended. Among the conference participants were the representatives from the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the International Road Federation (IRF), the International Union of Railways (UIC), the Automobile Association of Serbia, the Hellenic Road Safety Institute “Panos Mylonas”, the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR), the International Organization for Road Safety Prevention (PRI) and the Hellenic Federation of International Road Transport (OFAE).

With 1.3 million people dying and millions injured every year as a result of road crashes, road traffic safety has become a major global social, economic, development and health concern. Only in Europe as many as 127,000 die every year and 2.4 millions are injured inflicting, in addition to human suffering, high economic costs amounting to some 2 per cent of Europe's GDP. While the overall progress in increasing road safety has been made, in many UNECE countries more could and should be done. Road traffic risks are known and are preventable. They include, speeding, driving under the influence, non-use of seat belts, child restraints and helmets, unsafe infrastructure as well as non-respect for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

The conference marked the launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety in the UNECE region and provided an excellent opportunity for experts to present and discuss measures for improving road safety, sharing best practices and raising awareness. Many Government delegations declared commitments to take actions improving road safety as well as presented national strategies and road safety casualty reduction targets for 2011-2020. Transport experts shared country experiences in developing national road safety plans, setting targets and effectively implementing them. The European Union presented its comprehensive road safety policy, including the 2020 EU road safety target of halving the overall number of road deaths.

The conference provided examples of good road safety practices as well as ways of designing and implementing ambitious yet attainable and measurable targets during the Decade. The participants learned about comprehensive national programmes and policies that are being implemented or planned in the UNECE region as well as about the social, economic development and health impacts associated with road traffic safety.

The importance of management structures and functions of the lead road safety agencies and their role in preventing road traffic casualties was also discussed. The participants were informed about the main conclusions of a report currently being prepared by the UNECE on alternative arrangements that have been used in different countries and at different stages of development for effective management and coordination of road safety activities. Organizational structures used range from independent road safety commissions and councils to various types of lead agencies (each having its own advantages and disadvantages). It was recognized that there is no single universal solution that applies to all countries and at all times. Nevertheless, it is quite possible for countries with very different management structures still to be successful because of their particular circumstances and/or stage of safety development. However, it is possible to identify a number of common features that seemed to be present in all the countries which were most successful and that lessons could be distilled to provide some guidance for countries at earlier stages of road safety development.

Considering road safety as a problem which can only be solved through collective efforts and cooperation at all levels, the participants agreed on the following recommendations:

1. *To encourage* the design and implementation of road safety activities in areas of road safety management, road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behavior and post-crash care as prescribed by the Global Plan for the Decade of Action (2011-2020) for Road Safety.
2. *To support* the work of the UNECE's Road Safety Forum (WP.1) in increasing road safety activities and normative work as well as in advocating greater political commitment to road safety, in creating a platform for exchange of best practices and in developing road safety policies.
3. *To support* the work of the UNECE's World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) and to promote the adoption of WP.29 technical regulations.
4. *To promote* accession to and, where necessary, more effective implementation of UNECE international legal instruments.
5. *To endeavour to establish* lead national road safety agencies and to invite UNECE to offer a platform for their regular meetings.
6. *To encourage* multi-sectoral collaboration that includes academia, private sector stakeholders, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and the media.
7. *To set* national strategies/action plans and casualty reduction targets, to promote readiness assessment and to establish effective monitoring mechanisms.
8. *To endeavour to learn from successes and failures* by focusing road safety research on priority areas such as crash causality.

The strengthening of multisectoral international collaboration among governments and international organizations from public and private sectors and raising awareness on the global road safety crisis is necessary for the effective implementation of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/255 of March 2010. In this context, the conference participants appreciated the continuing commitment of the UNECE in promoting global, regional and national actions in a systematic and proactive way through, among other, the development of safety-related technical regulations and legal instruments addressing the main factors of road crashes such as those concerning the road user behaviour, vehicle and infrastructure.

The participants invited the international donor community to provide additional funding in support of regional and country road safety measures, especially in countries that are in most need. They expressed their gratitude to Serbia's Ministry of the Interior, Road Traffic Directorate, Ministry of Infrastructure and Road Traffic Safety Agency for hosting the conference in Belgrade and to the UNECE for having organized it.

The proceedings of the conference, including presentations and all conference material will be published on the UNECE website at http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/conf_belgrade.html.